

The Red Button

BY Will Irwin

AUTHOR OF THE CITY THAT WAS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY Harry R. Grissinger

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SYNOPSIS.

Tummy North, returning to his room to Mrs. Moore's boarding house at 230 a. m., discovers the body of Capt. John H. Hanska, another roomer, with a knife wound in his breast. Suspicion falls upon a man giving the name of Lawrence Wade, who had been heard quarreling with Hanska. During the excitement a strange woman who gives her name as Rosalie LeGrange, appears and takes into her own home across the street all of Mrs. Moore's boarders, including Miss Estrilla, an invalid, whose brother was a favorite among the other boarders. Wade is arrested. Mrs. LeGrange, who, while playing her trade as a trance medium, had advised Police Inspector Martin McGee several times, calls at his office to tell what she knows of the crime. While she is there, Constance Hanska, widow of the murdered man, whose existence had been unknown, appears. Mrs. Hanska says she had left her husband and disclosed the fact that Wade represented her and visited Hanska on the night of the murder in an effort to settle their affairs. She admits Wade was in love with her. Wade is held by the corner of a jury for the death of Hanska. Mrs. LeGrange is released and returns to Mrs. LeGrange's house. He becomes infatuated at once with Mrs. LeGrange, and at the same time Mrs. LeGrange secretly examines the shadow of her boarders in search of one the red button will fit. She pretends to go into a trance to Miss Estrilla's room and communicates with spirits. Rosalie secures from Inspector McGee the services of an Italian detective to work under her direction. Rosalie finds evidence to show that Estrilla's real name is Perez and that they formerly lived in Port of Spain. Rosalie goes into another trance in Miss Estrilla's room and guides the young woman's conduct. In succeeding seances Rosalie leads Miss Estrilla to believe she is talking with the spirit of John H. Hanska, and gives information that leads her to prepare for a surprise test. With Inspector McGee and detectives at the windows, Rosalie, in a final seance, leads Miss Estrilla to tell, in a supposed conversation with the spirit of Hanska, that her brother Juan held the knife that pierced Hanska's heart. Convinced by the officers, Miss Estrilla makes a full confession. She tells how Hanska secured possession of her jewels and fled to New York, and how she and her brother Juan had traced him to Mrs. Moore's house. She says that Juan, dressed in her clothes, entered Hanska's room to search for the jewels. That Hanska awoke and rushed at the intruder who picked up a knife from the table to threaten Hanska. She declares Hanska, in his rage, was suddenly stricken with apoplexy and fell upon the knife, which pierced his heart.

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

He sat facing the door, he perceived her first; he rose with an expression of real surprise and pleasure. "Why, Mrs. LeGrange! How did you get here?" he said. But now his eyes caught Betsy-Barbara. She, too, had risen, as one who acts at last after long strain of repression. Her color came and went; she was looking at Rosalie and then back at Estrilla.

"Miss Lane," said Rosalie in a quiet, meaningful voice, "we'll excuse you. Take your coat, dear."

Estrilla opened her mouth as though to protest, made an inarticulate sound, stopped. His eyes were on Rosalie.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means first that you had better sit down," she said. "The waiter's lookin' this way. A man in your position can't afford to make a scene in a public place."

Estrilla sank with an unsteady motion into his chair. At this physical support, he seemed to grip his nerve.

"What do you mean by my position? Why do you come this way—why?"

"Listen. First of all, I'm your friend. Get that right away! I'm here to help you. An' I'm a burry."



"How Did You Get Here?"

So are you. The police have your sister. By tonight they'll be after you." Estrilla gripped the arms of his chair; the green shade crept back. He moistened his lips once or twice with his tongue.

"Remember!" went on Rosalie under her voice, "no scene. Hold on to yourself. Makin' one now is the last thing you ought to do. Is the bill paid? All right. Now get your hat. Now put on your sister. Yes, your gloves an' your stick!" Estrilla obeyed her docilely.

"Now come with me into the park—it's safer, because we can watch."

"But my sister—I don't care for myself—I must go to—"

"I'm here," said Rosalie LeGrange, "to do what I can for you an' your sister both. Now come, I tell you an' you keep on bein' a fool!" At this dash of mental cold water, he rose. Rosalie walked close behind him, ready to support him should he stagger. Outside, a park foot-policeman

walked slowly down the path. Estrilla saw him, started, hesitated.

"Not unless you make a scene!" cried Rosalie, anticipating his thought. "I'm not arresting you—can't you understand that?" She hurried him to a lonely park bench, half hidden in the shrubbery. When she turned to look him full in the face again, his color was normal; he had regained his grip. And he spoke with a touch of his old boyish insouciance.

"This is a little melodrama you are staging, Mrs. LeGrange? Am I the hero or the villain?"

"I expected you to be suspicious an' try to bluff this through," said Rosalie in her most matter-of-fact tone, "that's why I stole this note an' brought it here." She had been keeping her hands in her muff. She drew them out, now, and handed him the vital paper.

"I am telling to the police all I know of my part and my brother's part in the death of Capt. John H. Hanska. I have confessed that we followed him to America to get my jewels, and that it was my brother Juan who appeared to have stabbed him."

"MARGARITA PEREZ."

He read it. As he looked up he was still master of himself, but Rosalie could perceive behind his mask a kind of vibration, an inner agitation of all his nerves. But his will still mastered his voice.

"Margarita Perez—who is she?"

"She is your sister. You are Juan Perez—not Estrilla. You are from Port of Spain. You came here to follow Captain Hanska."

"Where did you hear this?" inquired Estrilla, with a pitiful attempt to put sarcasm into his voice.

"I have listened to her confession," replied Rosalie calmly. "She told the police—after she signed that paper—how you went into Captain Hanska's room at night to get your family jewels, how that trick alarm on his strong-box woke him up, an' how you killed him."

But Juan Estrilla had leaped up now as though his nerves would be denied no longer.

"You are here to betray me—I know it now!" he said.

"I suspected this trouble was coming," replied Rosalie LeGrange. "I sent Miss Lane to deliver you here at five o'clock—because it's an out-of-the-way place an' quiet. Sit down."

Estrilla shook as he resumed his seat.

"Does she know?" he asked.

"Not yet," said Rosalie.

"I didn't give her my real reason. I was glad," she pursued, "to hear you bust out in that sincere way when I said you killed Hanska. I put that in for a test; an' you stood it. Now sit there and listen to what else your sister said, an' see if any of that could have been worked out by detectives. She says you didn't kill Hanska, that he died of apoplexy an' fell on the knife you was holdin' against him."

Estrilla turned his great eyes and moistened his lips as though to speak; but he held to his nerve and made no sound.

"She says that you carried out that box of jewels with the cover open, an' that a diamond buckle dropped out as you were passing through the door. An' when she came back in your clothes after you telephoned to her, she picked it up. The jewels are in Caracas. You dropped the box in the river. Could anybody patch that together? Could anybody guess that?"

"Then if he died of apoplexy—if I didn't kill him—why should they arrest me?" asked Estrilla.

"Young man," said Rosalie, "how could you prove it?"

Innocently and directly, Estrilla came out with what amounted to his confession.

"He was always in danger of apoplexy—my sister knew that. And undoubtedly it was a mortal seizure. For his hands were going toward his head, not toward the knife. Even when he fell and died, his hands were still going up, not down. I have seen doctors. I have read about apoplexy in every medical book in the public library, and when I saw him last—there was blood in his nostrils."

Rosalie nodded.

"I saw that, too. My, but coroner's physicians are dense!" she said. "Now I've got to talk hard and straight. You were in the act of burglary. It don't make no difference that you had a right to burgle—no jury would recognize that. The coroner's physician never thought of anything but that stab wound—never thought to look for apoplexy—case seemed too plain. You an' I are the only people who thought about that bloody nose. The body's cremated, an' if it wasn't—well, we won't go into that. Why Juan Perez, they'd laugh at you. Do you see? Don't you get your act?"

He was trembling, and now he made a pitiful movement with his hands as though to steady his head.

"So you must get away."

"But my sister—"

"Now hold on to yourself. I've got to talk awful to make you see the thing. She didn't kill him—she couldn't. Anybody could see that. A sick little thing like her hasn't the power in her to drive such a knife into a big man who's standin' on his

feet. No jury would swallow it. She's accessory or somethin'—but you can bet, Mr. Juan Perez, that an American jury ain't goin' to give a verdict against a sick little woman who's an accessory because she's standin' by her brother. They may do that in English countries, but not here. An' which do you think would be better for your sister—to go to jail until her trial, or to wait by the gate of Sing Sing an' take you away some morning all dead an' floppy after you'd had ten thousand volts of electricity switched into your spinal column—"

Estrilla was on his feet now, in a crisis of nerves. His eyes closed and opened to a set stare.

"I thought you'd see it," said Rosalie. "I won't keep you in suspense any longer. You're goin' to get away. An' I've fixed it. Look at this—here, take it!" She pulled another paper from her muff, handed it to Estrilla. It shook in his hands as he read.

"A seaman's paper," he said at length.

"For Antonio Corri, an Italian sailor signed for the schooner Maud. He fell



"That First Gang Plank," She Said.

down a hatch this morning an' broke his leg. An' he can't go. You're shippin' as him. I've fixed it. The Captain don't know who you are. He only knows that he's got a man who must beat it out of the country—an' he'll do anything for me. He lands at Halifax. He'll fix it for you to get to the next place—wherever that may be. I'm going to write him at Halifax advising him about that. An' you're to tell him, so he can tell me, so I can tell your sister, where you've gone. Got any money on you?"

"Only a little."

"Well, the Captain has two hundred dollars of mine—for you. I want you to understand it's a loan with interest at five per cent., to be paid when it's safe. If you need any more, I'll send it to the skipper—same terms. That's agreed?"

"Yes. Why do this?"

"Take all this trouble? Old fool! Now, listen. There's a taxi over there dischargin' passengers at the Casino. We're goin' to flag it. We're goin' to take it as far as Sixth Avenue, an' we'll travel by elevated the rest of the way, because guards don't remember their passengers an' taxicab drivers sometimes do. We'll get on separate trains an' meet on the dock—Pier 16½ East River. Know how to find that? Well, I'll tell you as we go. Here! Taxi!" And Rosalie waved to the chauffeur.

"Sixth Avenue elevated. Nearest station," she directed.

In the midst of her minute instructions, Estrilla (or Perez) started once to thank her.

"How do you come to do this?" he said. "And how did the police ever—"

Rosalie put her mouth close to his ear.

"Taxis are built funny sometimes," she whispered; "the chauffeur might hear."

He turned on her a caressing look of gratitude. Life was back in his face and motion now. He looked out on the hurried rows of West Side apartment-houses, and dropped for a second into Spanish.

"Sangre de Dios!" he said, "how I shall always hate New York!"

They were drawing up at the elevated.

"Remember how to get there?" she whispered before she opened the door.

"Sure? Go ahead an' take the first train. I'll follow on the next. Walk slow after you get off. I'll walk fast—neither of us wants to loiter on that pier."

If Estrilla hoped that he would hear further clearance of these mysteries at the dock, he was disappointed. As he passed the gate, Rosalie shot from under shadow of a truck. She glanced to right and left. None of the roustabouts was looking or listening.

"That first gangplank," she said. "The Captain's aboard expectin' you. Just say to him, 'I'm Corri.' He knows the rest. You'll change clothes in his cabin. He'll keep you at work until you sail—at daybreak. Go—don't thank me—go—I'm sure you'll see your sister in a year or two. Go—now for the first time in her dialogue



with him, soft emotion entered her voice. "An' God be good to you!" she said. She turned him almost roughly.

"One moment," he said; "my love to my sister—oh, take care of her." His voice grew lighter, then, and he almost smiled. "And tell Miss Lane for me that she is beautiful and good!" He walked away. When a second later, he glanced back over his shoulder, she was making a rapid pace toward the dock-gate.

Rosalie passed the shadow of the pier, and gained sight of the Maud's dock. She saw Estrilla go aboard, saw Captain Baldwin meet him, saw them enter the cabin together. She waited no longer.

That was a day of heavy personal expense for Rosalie. Two blocks away she took another taxicab. This time she hesitated a moment before she gave the driver his directions.

"Hotel Cyrano, Brooklyn, first, I guess."

After a time, she began talking under her breath again—repeating her last phrases to Estrilla.

"God be good to you"—God or somebody will have to be awful good to me, now. Well, there's one relief: feature, he won't break his heart over Betsy-Barbara. It was only a flirtation with him, after all. I wonder what they're made of inside—those high-class dages!"

CHAPTER XIX.

When Dimples Win.

Inspector Martin McGee, as one who must do something, no matter how futile, to lull his impatience, rang a bell on his desk.

"Send for Grimaldi, again," he said to the doorman.

"Grimaldi," he greeted the scholar of the Italian squad, "what did this Mrs. LeGrange say to you when she let you go—and just when was it?"

"It was night before last," replied Grimaldi. "I'd met her for a report and told her that Estrilla—or Perez—had an engagement with his tailor to try on some clothes for two-thirty yesterday afternoon. She told me then that she had finished with me, and I was to report back to headquarters—which I did yesterday."

"His rooms—Estrilla's—are being watched in case he returns?"

"Yes. We've got some one at every place where he's likely to appear."

"All right. That'll do."

Then the Inspector fell to pacing the floor and to meditating. He durst not leave his office. The search was covered at every point where the missing criminal or the missing Rosalie LeGrange might be expected to appear. He must stay in his office until—oh, why had he trusted Rosalie LeGrange to arrest a desperate criminal alone? One obvious suspicion did not occur to him; never for a moment did he distrust Rosalie.

She had gone out to make the arrest single-handed, for some good reason of her own.

She had failed, and dreaded to come back without her man; she had been delayed and would appear with him yet; she had ventured too much and—something had happened to her. Here, Inspector McGee smote a flat into an open palm and swore under his breath. That consideration, and not the failure of the department to put the finishing touch on a big case, was the thing which haunted him now, made him unable to rest his body or to quiet his mind.

The last eighteen hours had been one long secret hunt for Juan Perez alias Estrilla, and for Rosalie LeGrange. When, after the detectives finished with Miss Estrilla—Senorita Perez—he found Rosalie LeGrange

coming down the stairs, armed to the teeth? A man is not supposed, except by an extinct type of Puritan, to "give away" the woman who has made sacrifices for him; and even the extinct type of Puritan would hardly expect you to tell your hostess that her dinner party had been dull. From this heterogeneous group of examples, one may infer that there are lies and lies; and while it is never permissible to lie, it is sometimes quite unpermissible to do anything else.

Bonehead Bill.

Bill Jones is such a stupid guy he stays at home at night, instead of sporting round with us down town where things are bright. I never saw Bill take a drink. He doesn't care for shows, and the "open-evenings" savings-bank's the only place he goes; for Bill's so all-fired stupid he just can't see the fun of blowing half the envelope before the week's begun. And Bill could stand it pretty well, because—well, don't you see, he's so confounded stupid he draws twice as much as me!—Hugh Kahler, in the Wells Fargo Messenger.

Undesirable.

"Are they desirable tenants?"

"Dear me, no. They're nice people, but they've got four children."—Detroit Free Press.

When Lies Are Excusable

Instances Given of Times When the Truth Is Not Expected or Wanted.

Few people, I fancy, would say, after deliberation, that no lie was ever justified. To be sure, I once heard a serious young man protest that Shakespeare had damned Desdemona by allowing her at her last gasp to exculpate Othello. I have also known people who objected vehemently to the late Mark Twain because he said so many things that were not so. But there are occasions when lies are taken for granted, even by the law.

A man on trial for his life is supposed to tell the truth, but not if it will incriminate him. A wife is not dragged to the witness stand against her will—no one would legitimately expect anything but perjury from her. I do not see much difference between legally permitting a man to say "Not Guilty" when he is guilty, and legally permitting him to lie. Is there any solitary maiden who would not willingly give the midnight marauder to understand that her husband was just

secretly gone, he waited for a time at the house. Rosalie made no sign. Presently, Miss Harding and Miss Jones came home to dinner, and afterward Professor Noll. McGee detained them all. Seven o'clock passed; and the other three boarders failed, like the landlady, to appear. They were Mr. North, Mrs. Hanska, and Miss Lane—all involved in the Hanska case. When he noted this suspicious circumstance, he removed Miss Estrilla to a private room in the criminal ward at Bellevue. Booked as Margaret Perez, she attracted no great attention from the reporters; especially since a surgeon, instructed in advance, gave out a hint that she was merely a witness in a counterfeiting case. Then began an all-night search—for Estrilla first, for Rosalie next, and, last of all for North and the two women.

Clutching that night, Inspector McGee, late at every possibility, visited Lawrence Wade in his cell at the Tombs and questioned him. The announcement that Mrs. Hanska had disappeared seemed to disturb him more than any device for breaking silence that the police had ever used; but still he maintained his attitude of defiant and somewhat insolent calm. Unshaken, he stood all the questioning; and McGee, aware now of his innocence, had not the heart to crowd him to the wall.

So the night had worn away; and so the morning. And Rosalie LeGrange made no sign. How long—how long? He turned to ring for a detective.

The doorman entered.

"Mrs. LeGrange to see you," he said.

For the first time in his life of brute force, Martin McGee felt his physical powers crumbling and waning within him. He sat down at his desk. Rosalie LeGrange had come. That meant present success and ultimate triumph; for Rosalie LeGrange had never failed him yet. Doubtless she had achieved another of her miracles—possibly Juan Perez alias Estrilla was just behind her.

"Show her in—and I'm engaged—don't disturb me for anything—until I tell you."

He started as she stood for a moment facing him. Dead of eye, dead of expression, dead of tint—she looked again all her age. She moved toward him at a pace which showed effort with every step.

"Well," he cried, "well! We've had a chase for you. Gee! I couldn't think what had happened!" His professional concerns rushed into his mind with the departure of his greater anxiety.

"Where is he? Did you get him?" he asked.

She ignored the chair which he pushed toward her. And she simply shook her head.

"What!" exclaimed Martin McGee. "What! That comes of letting you try to get him alone. What a damn fool—did he get away from you?"

Rosalie, still looking into his eyes, shook her head again.

The change in Inspector McGee's face expressed his emotion as clearly as though he had spoken in volumes. His skin flushed; his eyes grew hard; his jaw snapped.

"You didn't?"

Again Rosalie shook her head.

"What do you mean—what do you mean?"

"I let him go—I helped him get away," said Rosalie LeGrange.

"Well, by G—!" cried Inspector McGee. "By God, we'll get him and you. Fool me, will you—and I trusted you! If you think you can beat a general alarm—where's that doorman?"—with another thought, his hand went toward the battery of electric bells which could summon armed men as from the ground. But Rosalie caught his wrist.

"Wait!" she said. "If you ring that bell, you shut me up for good. Do you think any little police Third Degree can get anything out of me that I don't want to tell? Your one chance to get the truth is to hear it now. The minute anybody else comes into that door—I close my face. Take your hand away from there. Sit down!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Peace in That Family.

A little girl being lost, was taken to the police station, where the officers tried to learn her name. At last, after many vain efforts, one of them asked her:

"Tell me, dear, what names does your mother call your father?"

"She doesn't call him any name," the child answered, innocently. "She likes him."

WATERY BLISTERS ON FACE

Smithville, Ind.—"Six months ago our baby girl, one year old, had a few red pimples come on her face which gradually spread causing her face to become very irritated and a fiery red color. The pimples on the child's face were at first small watery blisters, just a small blotch on the skin. She kept scratching at this until in a few days her whole cheeks were fiery red color and instead of the little blisters the skin was cracked and scaly looking and seemed to itch and burn very much."

"We used a number of remedies which seemed to give relief for a short time then leave her face worse than ever. Finally we got a cake of Cuticura Soap and a box of Cuticura Ointment. I washed the child's face with very warm water and Cuticura Soap, then applied the Cuticura Ointment very lightly. After doing this about three times a day the itching and burning seemed entirely gone in two days' time. Inside of two weeks' time her face seemed well. That was eight months ago and there has been no return of the trouble." (Signed) Mrs. A. K. Wooden, Nov. 4, 1912.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free, with 32-p. Skin Book. Address post-card "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."—Adv.

The Effect.

"Well, how did you sleep last night? Goethe spent the night there once."

"Very badly. My husband adores Goethe, and he was spouting him all night."

His Way.

"That jockey beat the record."

"Did he do it with a whip?"—Baltimore American.

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